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How Work Integration Social Enterprises help to realise Capability: a comparison of three Australian Settings

Abstract

Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) are a response to reconfiguring social support for disadvantaged people. Here, theory and methodology from social geography were applied, to consider capability realised in/by three Australian regional city WISEs. Data were gathered using observation and interviews with supervisors and employees. Coding identified capability, then analysed by physicality, people, narratives and practices to explore how WISEs 'assemble' capability. Comparing across cases highlighted elements that contribute to capability realisation. Evidence generated reveals features of work and organisation design that might be deployed to enhance capability realisation. Social geographical approaches provide insights into *how* social enterprises generate value.

Keywords

social enterprise; work; capability; assemblage; rural;

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Introduction

One role for social enterprises in contemporary society, is to support un- or under-employed people from disadvantaged circumstances to realise their potential capability (Barraket et al. 2017). In this paper a novel approach is taken by drawing on relational (Cummins et al. 2007) and assemblage theory (Foley 2010) from social geography, to consider how spaces and places within three regional Australian social enterprises support employees to realise capability. How this happens is investigated through analysing the assembled elements that promote capability, including narratives, physical objects and locations, people and their actions, and practices. Capability is understood here as personal enabling resources that provide individuals with the freedoms to convert opportunities into functionings (Sen 1992); for example, the personal resources to convert opportunities for employment into holding a job. Viewing social enterprises through an assemblage lens enables generation of evidence about how they are designed (or not) to enable individuals to realise capability through interactions between enterprise employees and features in and of, the social enterprises. Exploring how each of three social enterprises provides an assemblage promoting capability, enables identification of common threads and differences that influence capability realisation.

The disadvantage experienced by social enterprise employees in the study involves social marginalisation through disability, illness, culture and relative poverty. The benefit argued for social enterprises ensues from their dual position as commercial businesses, but which have an overt social role (Barraket et al. 2010). Such duality means that employees can experience work in businesses, while also benefitting from an environment that explicitly promotes social values. In social enterprises that employ disadvantaged people, there are

opportunities to gain work-skills, experiences and confidence (Lysaght et al. 2012; Roy et al. 2017), with the social purpose often manifest through offering flexible 'people-centred' models of work integration (Hazenberg et al., 2013, Spencer et al., 2016 ; Elmes & Vanguard Laundry Services, 2017). The duality also underpins promotion of social enterprise as useful in situations where there are limited economic opportunities because it provides work experiences; and where there is a vision for community development because it enables inclusion. Thus, in the regional city locations of the study, social enterprises can contribute to individuals' wellbeing, but also more widely to community capacity through embedded rural social environments where local networks tend to be more dense due to strong and numerous relational ties (Granovetter, 1985).

Social enterprise is currently popular with many governments for employing disadvantaged people, either as an alternative, or as a stepping stone, to mainstream work (Vidal, 2005). Such 'work integration social enterprises' (WISEs) are often framed as supporting people to become more self-sufficient through work - as active economic contributors - rather than relying upon welfare (Dart 2004; Defourny and Nyssens 2010; Teasdale 2012). All of the social enterprises in the study were WISEs.

In recent years, social researchers have sought to understand wider 'value-added' impacts of social enterprise beyond work experience; for example, on aspects of wellbeing (Macaulay et al. 2017; Roy et al. 2014, 2017; Elmes & Vanguard Laundry Services, 2017; Spencer et al, 2016; Chan, 2015; Chiu, 2018). Capability is a resource that has begun to be considered as a potential outcome of social enterprises. For example, one study considered the role of social enterprises in 'dispersing' opportunity (Weaver 2018) by making technology more affordable to consumers (Grunfeld, Hak, and Pin 2011). A previous single case study by the authors

focused on wellbeing realisation in a social enterprise. It tested a geographical methodology that identified capability as one aspect of wellbeing realised through interconnected – depicted as 'assembled' - features (paper by authors). In that study, Spaces of Wellbeing Theory was applied as a conceptual framework (Fleuret and Atkinson 2007). The study also considered security, therapy and social integration realised. This study specifically focuses on capability realised and compares across three WISEs. Evidence is from mixed qualitative data collected through an Australian Research Council-funded Discovery Project (2017-19) that explored the contribution of social enterprises to regional city life. The idea of assemblage is used as a way of framing analysis of whether and how social enterprises are spaces where capability is realised.

Background

Conceptualising Capability

Sen (1980) discussed capability as a way of considering human wellbeing that did not focus on utility or commodities (Deneuilin 2013). He suggests capability is about individuals having the conditions to enable choice from opportunities '…to accomplish what we value being or doing'' (Sen 1992, 31). Alkire (2005) notes that Sen's understanding of capability is based on the premise that individuals can and should have freedom and agency to achieve what they can and want to. In this conceptualisation, capability is an individual's currency for deployment "to choose from possible livings'' (Sen 1992, 40). Capability enables an individual to convert opportunity into functioning (where functioning is a measurable output - such as an educational qualification or a job, related to capability) (Sen 1999).

There is an implication that capability is related to interactions between skills, knowledge and agency. To convert opportunities into functioning, people may need to assess information,

use networks, apply heuristics and then take action. Many people cannot access useful information through lack of skills or know-how and due to contextual impediments (e.g. disempowerment through gender inequities or other fixed or context-related forms of inequality) (Alkire 2005; Deneuilin 2013). Thus, capability is not just dependent on an individual and what they want to do, but also on the situations in which they find themselves living, including particularly their access to status and power (Deneulin and McGregor, 2010).

The lens of capability can provide a comprehensible way of understanding how individuals can 'progress' from positions of disadvantage, including socio-economic challenges, physical or cognitive disabilities or illness (situations experienced by employees in this study), to greater self-actualisation (Alkire 2005). Burchardt (2004) proposes capability as a useful way for considering disadvantages experienced by people with different disabilities. Looking at capability places people with a disability not as 'impaired' compared with 'standard' people; rather, they are people with varying access to capability resources (Watts and Ridley 2007; Burchardt 2004). Reconceptualising disadvantage as the holding of fewer capability resources changes how disadvantages can be regarded. This moves us from labelling people as deficited to understanding people as 'capability-poor', with potential to have their capability enhanced (Feldman and Gellert 2006). Policymakers and practitioners have variously adopted and applied the concept of capability, but most often within the macro human capabilities approach which measures sets of quantitative indicators at societal level (Al-Janabi, Flynn, and Coast 2011). Here, Sen's ideas of capability are applied at the micro-level, with a particular focus on how individuals accrue capability as a personal resource.

Capability and Work

High income societies value work as the norm for the adult population. Jahoda (1981) notes the ‘manifest’ and ‘latent’ aspects of work commonly identified (p.188). Income is the manifest consequence, with latent aspects of providing routines and structure, social connection, activity and building identity and status. Preparing adults for work underpins a societal role proposed for the WISE sector. Traditionally, accruing learning or education is the way to increase one’s capability for work (Wagle 2009). An individual’s level of education is often aligned with their freedom to achieve things they want – for example, earning the income for a desired lifestyle. Beyond formal qualifications, Lebmann (2009) describes how education consists of accrued ongoing experiences which progress chains and feedback loops of interactions ‘‘between an individual and objects and other persons’’ (based on Dewey 1938, p.43). This points to experience creation occurring through ongoing exposure to relational situations. Sets of objective conditions give rise to the internal conditions in a person that constitute experiences. Lave and Wenger (1991) go further, depicting how capability realisation can lead to mastery, a situation enabled by deep skills and knowledge, but also realised through accruing appropriate sociocultural practices. This tends to derive through observing, experimenting, adapting and transforming in spatial contexts that enable or constrain capability development through workplace design, rules and social practices (Fahy, Easterby-Smith and Lervik, 2014).

Daily life involves individuals passing through successive situations, thereby building experience and education (Dewey 1938, 43). Lebmann (2009) depicts how experiences over-layer and accrue as one situation carries over to the next. Building-up experience lays the foundations for new learning and more experiences (Dewey 1938, 44). In a relational situation, people that guide, support and help to form experiences, are educators (Lebmann 2009) and the places and spaces of learning are educational. Saito (2003) explored the

relationship between education and Sen's notion of capability, suggesting education as enabling the freedom to choose among alternatives. She differentiates between physical capabilities to perform tasks and learning the values and attitudes necessary for making decisions about using physical capabilities. Saito argues that learning that expands capability makes people autonomous and develops their judgement about when to deploy their capability.

Given this, it is possible to envisage how capability might realise through experiences within social enterprises, and as a result of interactions with elements that serve to promote capability that are found there (for example, equipment, supportive supervisors and work-routines). Thus, social enterprises could be proposed as relational spaces with potential 'capability energy'. Supervisors, and indeed other people in WISEs such as volunteers and experienced employees, could be viewed as educators embedded within, and influencing, objective conditions aimed at realising capability. This capability could then be deployed both in and outside the social enterprise space (paper by authors; paper by authors).

It has been argued that capability, freedoms and other choice-making resources as depicted by Sen (1992) are hard to operationalise and measure (Fleuret and Atkinson 2007), thus functioning becomes all that is measured (Wagle 2009). Applying relational methodology enables progression beyond this situation. It can provide insights about *how* capability is realised and highlight elements of workplaces that support capability realisation such that these elements can be identified, acknowledged and supported.

Work Integration Social Enterprise

WISEs developed as a response by some European countries to late twentieth century de-institutionalisation of psychiatric care (Galera and Borzaga 2009; Laratta 2016; Thomas 2004; Spear and Bidet 2005). Ways were sought to support those previously institutionalised to transition into community life. Mainstream employment often specifically disadvantages particular groups, which are thus marginalised from the benefits aligned with working (see Jahoda 1981). WISEs have been designed using various legal forms, to support vulnerable groups, including those experiencing mental or physical illnesses or disabilities, and unemployment (Hazenberg et al. 2012; Jeffery 2005; Vilà et al. 2007; Warner and Mandiberg 2006). The idea of WISEs spread internationally, framed as a form of empowering community economic development intervention, and to overcome barriers to individuals' employment (Mason et al. 2015). Some countries where there is a strong social welfare tradition and less stigma about moving in and out of the labour market, have less prevalence of social enterprises (Defourny and Nyssens 2008).

Studies of WISEs have considered how they change societal perceptions of people with cognitive disabilities (Lysaght et al. 2012) or mental illnesses (Warner and Mandiberg 2013). The available literature suggests that WISE have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of people experiencing poor capability through exclusion by: providing employment (Ho & Chan, 2010; Roy et al., 2014); increasing people's income and thus their standards of living (Gilbert et al., 2013; Macaulay et al, 2017; Morrow et al., 2009), and broadening people's opportunities for social connection (Chan, 2015; Barraket, 2013). Considering even WISEs that focus on work integration through low status insecure forms of employment in the USA, Cooney (2011) found that increased security could result, for individuals. However, both Cooney (2011) and Williams et al. (2016) have found that WISE can recreate or amplify conditions that reduce wellbeing where they offer low-quality, high

risk and insecure employment. Many papers identified in Roy et al's (2014) systematic review about social enterprise impacts on health and wellbeing, studied WISEs. Overall, however, extant literature about effects of WISEs on realising individuals' capability and other social aspects of wellbeing, is limited, particularly in relation to the micro-level of factors in capability realisation.

Materials and Methods

This study explored whether and how social enterprises might help to realise individual capability, and the extent to which assembled aspects of physical location and objects, people, practices and narratives found in social enterprises, might contribute. Deploying a multiple comparative case design (Baxter and Jack 2008) informs highlighting of similarities and differences between social enterprise settings. A qualitative geographical methodology, based on the idea of interconnected elements in relational spaces, guided data collection about capability realisation. This approach resonates with ideas from social geography, emerging initially from the idea of assembled 'therapeutic landscapes' (Gesler 1992), and since applied to analyse other types of 'spaces', including spaces of wellbeing (Fleuret and Atkinson 2007), care (Milligan 2001; Conradson 2003), and recovery (Price-Robertson et al. 2017). This methodological approach helps to accommodate interdisciplinary understandings and multidimensional perspectives to help explore evidence about *whether* an effect is occurring, and then explain *why*. Authors previously trialled the feasibility of this approach in a pilot study. Here, the focus is on the potential of WISEs as spaces that can realise capability. Data were collected through mixed methods, then an assemblage approach was applied to analysis (Foley 2010), to identify if and how 'components' came together relationally, to produce the spaces observed.

Foley and others apply assemblage to understand the components that combine in therapeutic settings (2010; Bell et al. 2017). Their work exemplifies how, broadly conceived, assemblage is an idea that can be useful for exploring experience composition. Bell et al. propose that the physicality of places provides a 'palette' (2017, 4) onto which material, metaphorical and inhabited dimensions are overlaid to form a 'constellation of difference' (Foley 2014, 17), for each unique setting. Here, this conceptualisation is applied in considering whether and how WISEs might be assemblages to realise capability.

Case Study Settings and Participants

The study focuses on Australian regional city WISEs. Regional cities are smaller than State capitals, generally acting as service centres for large rural regions [www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/what-is-regional-australia/]. Linked to the nation's large land mass and relatively small population, regional Australia is known for struggle to maintain economic competitiveness in the context of thin markets (Regional Australia Institute 2014). Thus, capability realisation, as considered here, is significant for improving individual lives, and for enhancing the human resources available to regions.

Table 1 summarises characteristics of included case study settings, all of which are WISEs to provide supported work for disadvantaged people. The cases were recruited via convenience sampling of those where CEOs were known to researchers and interested to participate. Settings are located in two regional Australian cities with populations between 84,000 and 95,000 (Census 2016 stats www.abs.gov.au); two (Farm and Catering) are in City 1 and one (AssistAll) in City 2. Farm provides the most diverse range of work experiences. AssistAll is the longest-running enterprise, established for over 20 years.

[Table 1 near here]

The majority of employees working at the included case settings receive income through a combination of direct-to-employee payments from the Australian National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) (Green et al. 2017) and a payment based on staff assessment of their degree of competence at work-tasks which increases if/as employee competence increases.

Data collection and analysis

For each enterprise, following consent, data were collected about actions and interactions, narratives and practices in relation to physical locations, objects and people, as follows:

1. Participant observation. Field notes were collected of five days of observation per setting, at different times, over four months.
2. Semi-structured interviews. These were conducted with four staff at each enterprise (staff members are defined as paid employees conducting supervisory-type roles).
3. 'Go-along' interviews. These are in-depth qualitative interviews, described as a 'hybrid between participant observation and interviewing' (Kusenbach 2003, 184). Go-alongs were conducted with social enterprise employees (defined as those employed for work integration experience) (Catering n=5; Farm n=4; and AssistAll n=5). These involved, for each employee-researcher pairing, asking the employee to lead the researcher on a journey through the social enterprise, sharing their activities and feelings at various points identified as significant by the employee. Go-alongs provided data from employees' perspectives. Places and objects were used to stimulate stories and discussion at go-along interviews. The method was useful where

employees were verbally reticent or had low reflective capacity, due to low confidence, communication or cognitive functioning. Go-alongs allowed employees expression through combinations of location, body language and verbal communication (Lager et al. 2015; Carpiano 2009; Ottoni et al. 2009).

Data were collected by TDC for two settings; and by a contract researcher for one setting. Data collection guides were shared and regular discussions ensured consistent data collection methods across settings. All data, de-identified, were transcribed and uploaded into NVivo (QSR International). Data were analysed and coded (see Table 2), by case: a) thematically for capability – deductively using a framework developed from previous study (paper by authors); and inductively for new themes; then, b) for components of assemblage (narratives, people, physicality and practices). All data were coded by two researchers, with samples coded by two additional coders. Ethics approval was from Swinburne University Ethics Committee (SUHREC 2017/079)

[Table 2 near here]

Results

Below, emphasising that each WISE represented a different assemblage supporting capability realisation, we have first considered Farm (F), Catering (C) and AssistAll (AA) separately. Some key elements that arose across all three are summarised briefly at the end. The research question addressed is: what is it about *this* social enterprise that makes it a space that helps realise employee capability? Assemblages of WISEs are analysed as: narratives; people; physicality (location and objects) and practices that researchers coded as 'capability'

(explained in Methods above). For clarification, *employees* [E] are those employed for work integration experience, while *staff* [ST] are those working in supervisory roles.

Farm

Farm was the only setting where capability was discussed as converted into functioning in gaining 'mainstream' job roles. One employee was taking steps to find a job in mainstream employment and another was considering applying for a NDIS business start-up grant. Past employees were discussed who had gained mainstream employment or who had moved to supervisor roles at Farm. Some employees talked of specialised expertise they had attained. Generally, though, it was acknowledged, that most employees' expectations did not involve moving to mainstream employment. Farm provided the strongest data, of the three enterprises, indicating an assemblage that was pro-capability realisation; expanded below.

Narratives: A discourse about employees striving to realise their potential emerged from staff interviews, including comments like: 'everyone is getting better'; [he is] 'stepping up'; [of employees] 'their progression'; and [staff seeing] 'people achieving'.

Stories of employee accomplishment were reiterated by multiple staff members, and confirmed in researcher observation and employee go-along interviews. For example, discussing Michael, a young man who first arrived at Farm as a volunteer, a staff member said:

> When he first come, you couldn't get two words out of him and he'd just cower around. He was very unsure of himself and what he could do. He'd ask you ten times how to do it and you'd just told him the day before, but he couldn't retain any of that. But now … he'll just go off, "[Supervisor

> name] you want me to do that?". "Yeah". He built the little wall down here by himself the other day.
>
> [F_ST_3]

Then Michael himself verified:

> There's the weeding, and then the watering plants… there's all the bricks that are on the side of the garden there - I helped put them in…Yeah. It looks really good. It's like at the side where all the…[bricks are]…I feel happy because I know, like, I've done that.
>
> [F_E_2 go-along]

A staff member explains, and Michael later verifies that, since starting at Farm, Michael has learned gardening skills and now aims to study horticulture at College. Additional stories of realising capability at Farm typically portray a journey where employees progress from being shy and awkward, then try-out different tasks and workplaces, and ultimately become confident autonomous workers with future goals.

Some employees accrue specialised knowledge and skills; for example, Sandra discusses her skills in produce selection:

> They used to have a herb mix and a lettuce mix, [but] I didn't know there was two different mixes, so I just chucked everything together. I ended up being a mini Heston Blumenthal when it comes to the mix. There's like 20 different species, and half of them I could name off the top of my head.
>
> [F_E_1 go-along]

People: several different 'groups' of participants were present at Farm; including staff, volunteers, employees and students from various local schools; and harnessed to support capability realisation, for example:

> …with some of the volunteers, they're great mentors and great for [employees] to work alongside of - to think: "well maybe I can do that." I know [staff member] is very good at pairing-up people that can learn alongside of each other or bring out skills that people already have, but haven't had the opportunity…
>
> [F_ST_1]

An outcome of these 'people-curation' strategies is enabling employees to feel accomplishment, as Sandra explains of her move from employee to staff member status:

> Researcher: … how does that make you feel?
>
> Sandra: I don't know - valued somewhere… When you're the only one with the knowledge.
>
> [F_E_1 go-along]

Physicality: Aspects of physical layout contribute to a sense of progression. There are several distinct work-sites, each associated with different routine to more specialised tasks. The 'block-room' hosts repetitious work of laundry-folding or painting mining blocks. Employees can 'progress' to other work-sites that involve advanced skills, creativity and problem-solving; for example, the garden which offers opportunities for self-directed problem-solving in selecting produce, building and compost-making. The welding and woodworking sheds

offer opportunities to design and make furniture, using hammers, nailguns and blowtorches. There are on-site training-rooms where formal, certificated education occurs.

Significant physical locations and objects emerged. For example, a staff member discussed personal development conversations with employees 'under the tree'. The tree is a place where employees can go for a cigarette break and is a location where staff know they can locate an employee, at a particular time to discuss wider issues while not interrupting work:

> …coming in to do this, usually there's been two or three conversations - whether it's been a formal meeting that we've had or a casual meeting under the tree - I think that's really important, the way that you meet with people.
>
> [F_ST_4]

The social enterprise headquarters (HQ), located in another part of the city, is another location associated with capability realisation. Employees attend HQ when they are considered ready to discuss significant developments. Such a meeting therefore signifies accomplishment:

> [At] times it's good to say okay, let's make this time… now we're encouraging people who are really comfortable to come into [HQ] because it's a step up, they're getting to know this is where the [employment] team are and meet some of my colleagues.
>
> [F_ST_4]

Practices: Some practices are associated with development milestones. Employees must regularly complete an employment plan listing achievements and goals, and are asked to also post these somewhere visible at home. Employees are encouraged to write work tasks they aspire to on the blackboard in the lunch-room:

> [I say] - remember you've got up on the Board - you can put up that this is where I want to work. I said, they might not be always able to do it for you, but just put a case forward.
>
> [F_ST_4]

Catering

Contrary to Farm, no specific stories emerged about capability that had converted into functioning in the form of mainstream employment. There was, however, discussion of employees that had acquired specialist roles and skills.

Narratives: One narrative emphasised Catering as a 'real business', thus giving employees 'real work' experience:

> A lot of [employees] want to learn how to cook - so it's like food is a major part in everybody's life and with all things on TV, all the cooking shows and all that, it's like 'oh, you know, I want to come and be a chef ', [but] This is a catering business… it's not a cookery class… we have a good reputation here.
>
> [C_ST_2]

Employees shared their experiences of gaining skills and acknowledgement; for example, George who has a cognitive disability, explained learning to make various cakes and his growing confidence to experiment with baking at home. He gained accreditation as workplace occupational health and safety representative and works as a volunteer at a local care facility. He discusses:

> Researcher: How do you feel about working here?
>
> George: Good…It's something that you can learn to do…like any new stuff, new recipes. There's some new [cakes] or how do you want the[cakes] done - and all that.
>
> Researcher: I notice you show other people how to do things; how do you feel about that?
>
> George: Good, yeah, good.

And later:

> George: This is what I do…the OH and Safety. I put the mats in for the staff in case…I've got the white card. I mainly – like if [staff member] wants anything like mats and that.
>
> [C_E_1 go-along]

Lorelle, another employee, relates her specialism in this quote:

Researcher: [I've heard you are called the] - what is it, Sandwich Queen?

Lorelle: Sandwich Queen.

Researcher: That whole sandwich area is…

Lorelle: Mine and Joe's…I have trained a couple of people ...

Researcher: How do you feel when you get asked to train people up?

Lorelle: That they believe in me that I can do it. I'm the boss over [there].

[C_E_4 go-along]

People: Staff and employees are the main groups of people present. Staff have a strategy of hands-off supervision and monitoring at a distance, in the kitchen; but they will step in if they perceive a risky scenario. This supports an environment encouraging independent thinking and confidence-building among employees. Other strategies involve curating people in different team formations for benefits. As staff member Kay, relates:

> …some of the more experienced ones will sometimes come over and help one of the others… or you'll ask them – "how about you work together?" – and it gives that particular one that's more experienced a bit more confidence that they can do these things.
>
> [C_ST_5]

Physicality: Catering is a small and contained work setting, located in a converted bungalow. When food preparation is underway, the kitchen is a lively hub, with different work-benches designated for varying skills and levels of autonomous working. There are sinks for vegetable

cleaning and paring, a straightforward task; and benches for chopping, preparing sandwiches and baking cakes, more advanced tasks. Employees can progress from basic to complex tasks deploying cutting, weighing and measuring tools. If engaged in sandwich-making, employees might use knives and in making cakes, work independently measuring and mixing ingredients. Thus, even in the small kitchen, locations and objects provide a progression of opportunities to realise capability.

Practices: Staff discuss a process involving assessing and re-assessing individuals' skills and aptitudes, triaging and stretching individuals to explore how to optimise employee potential. One staff member describes a new employee's arrival:

> First - I would get them to peel carrots and potatoes - for the simple reason is to see how they can work with their hands…if they cannot peel, you don't really want them to touch a sharp knife …then we might do a recipe together where we're making something, but they don't have to touch a knife - you would cut the things and they will make a quiche, say, and they can sprinkle the stuff in or they can mix an egg. Show them how to whisk properly … so they've got some input instead of just cleaning or dishes all the time.
>
> [C_ST_4]

The goal is to identify each individuals' aptitudes, build on and from them, and to deploy employees to their full potential.

AssistAll

At the longest-running of the included enterprises, many AssistAll employees live with a cognitive disability. Many have worked at AssistAll for a long time and there was no discussion of moves to mainstream employment.

Narratives: There was limited discussion of extending individual's potential and more reference to keeping employees occupied. Staff described trying to find new types of work for employees as there was concern to keep employees stimulated:

> They are kept very busy, well sometimes, they're not always busy, but we are constantly looking for activities to keep them occupied. So – if they're not doing meaningful commercial work, try to find other activities to keep them gainfully employed… if they're not busy they don't feel like they're doing a proper day's job…
>
> [AA_ST_1]

People: Groups involved are staff, employees and customers. There was some discussion of activities to promote social inclusion; for example, one employee was on a panel at city event about inclusion and employees were involved in the organisations' fund-raising board. Sometimes they provided guided tours of AssistAll for visitors. However, less data emerged compared with other settings, about ways to grow capability through human resources strategies. Discussion gave a sense of trying to find work, rather than using strategies to grow employee capability. For example:

> The employees literally turn around and smile, some of them will come up and shake visitor's hands, others are just looking at me ... But … a couple of years ago we had a major event here…We organised for the employees to take visitors around on talks and tours, so the employees did the tour, I didn't do it, the employees did it. We got our new chairperson from that group, because he was so impressed by the fact that they were employees were happy, they were enjoying each other's company, they were enjoying the company of visitors, they were obliging.
>
> [AA_ST_1]

*Physicality***:** There was little sense of physicality signifying progression across work-sites and work types. It seemed all work-sites (recycled clothing shop, timber working, stationery/mail-processing and food-preparation) were regarded as involving repetitious work; with more discussion of how to relieve boredom, rather than building capability. As one staff member relates:

> You just sort of say: "Are you OK today, do you need a change?"...We have been doing a little bit of rotating of tasks which is something we brought into the timber industry some time ago - they all rotate so they don't get bored with the one job … down on the bottom floor where they're making pallets some people struggle with that a little bit. It's quite heavy work and hard labour so sometimes just coming up to the top floor where things are a little bit [lighter] type of work helps.
>
> [AA_ST_ 5]

Practices: A prominent practice, apparently aligning with the narrative of avoiding employee-boredom, is to roster employees for three-month periods on different work-tasks. It was noted that, as well as providing variety, this practice helps employees to learn different skills:

> …we have them rostered in the shop. The rosters go for three months and in their IPs [individual plans]… they all rotate so they don't get bored with the one job… they have three months in the kitchen and then it rotates and I get another new lot of people…basically they are learning different skills…while I've got my people rostered for the kitchen there will be a group that are rostered on to do the washing and the ironing, someone else to do the cleaning and then that rotates and goes right round and then…so everyone gets a turn at different things …
>
> [AA_ST_4]

There were hints that the rostering system might have downsides, for example a staff member reflects of one employee:

> … [now] she can just come in. She'll go to the potatoes and put them in the sink and start peeling them and I'll be getting the roasts in the oven and then she'll [say]… "what other veggies we are having?" And she'll have them on the stove and then… "Right…what are we doing for dessert?" She's, I think, a bit disappointed that her time is running out and I said – "Look, just because you're not on the roster, you know, that doesn't mean that you won't be helping out with catering…"

[AA_ST_4]

Some other work practices were noted that raised questions about whether focus was on extending capability; for example, a staff member noted that, while employees could fold and bag recycled clothing, staff assessed that employees were unable to handle cash and so employees had to ring for staff help with that task.

There were signs that staff had recently moved to re-consider opportunities for skills acquisition:

> …we probably haven't spent enough time trying to build skills in the past. So, another thing we're doing here now is, we're… [name] is doing me up a drawing of every pallet that we make in the place. We'll laminate it up quite large and we'll put it on show…so when we say we want to do [type of pallet] there's an explanation there and a picture…we're trying to build the skill level that way.

[AA_ST_2]

There was some discussion that the potential for capability realisation is more constrained for employees at AssistAll, particularly as some employees have worked there long-term and are established in routines, as one staff member said:

> …we've got to do a lot of visual management…like, some guys can't count to ten. So you do the first row for them, and then set the line across something to where they know that they've got to stack to a certain line – or something like that. There's a few that have got mobility issues [as well].

[AA_ST_2]

All Settings

Three features related to realising capability were consistent at all settings: a ‘can-do’ *narrative*; ‘wrap-around’ *people* (staff) support’; and an ‘*assemblage’* for developing ‘life-skills’.

Can-do: The enterprises were discussed as providing a unique non-judgemental and supportive place to try out and find aptitudes, exemplified here:

> I said, ‘well you’ve got to try this job. You can’t say…’ - and that’s a big thing. They say – “I can’t do it”. But [I say] “you got to try”.
>
> [C_ST_5]
>
> Some believe they can’t do some tasks and then you have to sit with them and then they realise they can do it. So, they feel great about themselves obviously because they can do it
>
> [AA_ST_3]

Staff provide ‘wrap-around’ support: staff supported employees with aspects of their personal life, as well as at work. Several examples arose where staff were available for contact, via phone or SMS, beyond work hours. A recurrent theme was helping employees to find safe, independent accommodation. It was unclear whether providing 24/7 support is a formal part of staff job descriptions.

Realising life skills: Staff said that employees’ moving to mainstream work was rare, and perhaps impossible under current circumstances:

> there's not many that have moved into open employment. I don't think there's that much around.
>
> [C_ST_2]

By contrast, there was evidence for all the enterprises of assembling elements to instill transferable life skills. Narratives identified included talking about healthy eating, taking physical exercise, understanding diversity and knowing about rights. Anecdotes were shared of people that had 'improved' aspects of their life through working at the enterprises, for example:

> …she talks more about being able to correct the 16-year old now, whereas before the 16-year old would just run rings [around her]…she has enrolled in a leadership course, so what that's done for her is she articulates better.
>
> [C_ST_1]

Staff discussed introducing new ideas to employees where they could, such as diversity when discussing television programmes. Working with employees to cook vegetables from the garden shows how healthy food moved from 'garden to plate', thus actively engaging employees in experiences that they could transfer to making healthy meals at home.

Figure 1 draws across the results above to summarise some of the elements of assembling capability realisation that were found.

[Figure 1 near here]

Discussion

Exploration of three work integration social enterprises as spaces to realise capability suggested this occurred via differently assembled workplace elements. As a reminder, capability is understood as personal resources to enhance agency and freedoms to act on opportunities and convert these into functionings. Results explored the extent to which WISEs appeared to help realise these personal resources and how.

Evidence was gained of technical work capability realised and transferred into formally acknowledged functioning, with examples of employees proceeding to mainstream employment or gaining promotions within social enterprises. More informally, there was evidence of employees accruing specialist work skills or mastery and the confidence associated with these accomplishments.

Evidence of life skills realisation, and application of these to daily life, was found, including gardening, cooking and health literacy; and evidence . Thus, as Foley noted of other relationally assembled 'spaces', social enterprises are revealed as both 'containers' and 'distributors' of capability (2014, 17). The capability realisation documented through this research coheres with the individual-level outcomes of WISE identified in previous studies (for example, Macaulay et al, 2017; Elmes and Vanguard Laundry Services, 2017; Chan, 2015); however, our study extends existing research by examining the micro-contexts in which such outcomes are produced.

Comparing findings across the WISEs (see Table 3), shows consistent elements of/in social enterprises that support or limit capability realisation. This supports the idea that social

enterprises can actively design for capability by carefully considering elements of: narrative; people and how they work; the physicality of social enterprises; and practices. Even in a smaller, single-industry enterprise (Catering), an assemblage can be created that provides opportunities for different employees to realise and grow capability, for example by widening roles to include administrative tasks or supporting volunteering elsewhere, as well as deepening roles.

[Table 3 near here]

While Catering and Farm foster the idea of progression - Farm most forcefully - staff of both enterprises also noted the value of repetitious work for those with constrained potential to 'progress', but also to allow some mental 'time-out' if employees are feeling stressed. Flow-through of employees with all levels of capability serves to keep these 'repetitious work' sites from being stigmatised as low value, by employees and staff. While not contesting previous findings (Cooney, 2011; Williams et al., 2016) that WISE models can undermine wellbeing, our study illuminates the contexts in which so called 'low quality' WISE work can support capability development by meeting people 'where they are at'. Repetitious work seemed a particular feature of AssistAll, with staff deploying rotations to avoid employee boredom. This practice could detract from developing specialism or mastery, but before being judgemental, it is worth considering that work rotation might be appropriate if employees have mobility or cognitive constraints and have few opportunities to move to mainstream employment.

Dis-assembling the aspects that support, or limit, capability realisation, is useful in suggesting capability realisation strategies. For example, apparently at the highest end of capability

realisation potential, Farm exemplified a setting with an assemblage promoting ideas of progression. The Farm capability assemblage features: different work-tasks and sites that necessitate different skills; narratives of progression; multiple goal-setting and personal development practices; plus facilitative staff. The findings suggest these as some key components if seeking a 'space of capability'. The strategy of simultaneously providing lower- through to higher-skill work in one enterprise could overcome some of the negative effects and tendencies to WISE isomorphism noted by Cooney (2011). She suggested the low-skill work available in many social enterprises 'condemned' employees to low-skill opportunities. Nonetheless, aligned with Cooney (2011), we did also find expectation among staff, that many employees would remain working at the social enterprises, with few transitioning into mainstream employment, even despite examples of mastery (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

The skilled and committed social enterprise supervisory staff emerged as particularly noteworthy. Staff must apply tailored strategies for individual employees, be almost constantly 'on' in the workplace and still be available for employees even outside work – a significant load.

While our focus is on micro-level capability assemblage inside WISEs, other factors operating at meso (organisation) and macro (city economy) levels are also likely to influence capability. And clearly, even beyond this are the social and political structures that inform social identity (Deneulin and McGregor, 2010) and that we do not directly consider in this paper. Table 1 shows some key distinctions between participating WISEs. Farm and Catering are public companies, aim for 'enhancing life outcomes through open employment, training and other opportunities and include people experiencing disadvantage and disability. In

contrast, AssistAll is a charity, aiming for empowerment and celebrating achievement, centred on people with a disability. These differences point to greater diversity among employees at Farm and Catering and a strongly business-focused operating model. These meso-level factors are likely linked to some differences observed between the enterprises as spaces realising capability.

Considering the macro-level, all of the enterprises operate within the constrained employment and economic situation of regional cities that essentially drawn upon and service a bounded population. The comment by a staff member that there 'aren't many opportunities' to progress to mainstream work, is significant and resonates with Cooney's findings noted above that 'robust efforts' are required to 'bridge' social enterprise-mainstream work divides (2011, 102). Given embedded social relationships (Granovetter, 1985), there could be opportunities to organise at city level to increase capacity in local employment 'eco-systems', by designing strategies geared to enabling social enterprise employees into a range of more mainstream employment opportunities – though it was not immediately obvious what organisation would lead or stimulate this locally. This aspect is explored more in another arm of the study, currently in progress.

Turning to the relational methodology and assemblage approach applied, we propose these ideas from social geography have been particularly useful for exposing the micro-level examination of why organisational spaces promote or hinder capability realisation. Micro-level studies such as this provide evidence to move the conversation from simply measuring functioning (outputs), to assessing the existence and strength of activities and elements of and within organisations, that contribute to realising capability. While Sen's understanding of capability tends to foreground individual agency, rather than societal structure (Crocker

2008), our findings suggest that meso-level workplaces can take steps to design to optimise social impacts for employees.

While enabling unique insights, one limitation of the methodology is its time-consuming nature, involving layers of data collection and analysis. Given the constraints of deploying different researchers across settings, there is an inevitable challenge with gathering consistent data. Involving multiple coders for verification was significant as this enabled another layer of checking that data were comparable across sites. Providing employees with a strong voice to inform findings was difficult as some were challenged in providing verbal data. The methods deployed went some way to enabling employees to feel comfortable to share their thoughts and feelings, through developing longer-term relationships with researchers and using go-along methods that elicited embodied expressions as well as dialogue. Nonetheless, work to improve methodology must progress, so there can be greater influence from employee experiences. The methodology does surface data that has a relationship with time because it raises capability realisation as a journey between differently assembled experiences (Bell et al. 2017), but it does not provide 'moment-by-moment' data showing how capability realises for individuals. 'Futuristic' data collection methods (perhaps involving sensors) should enable unobtrusive, accurate, consistent and dynamic collection of multiple data types, while remaining vigilant to ethical standards.

Conclusions

Social enterprises can operate to realise capability. Relational analysis using an assemblage approach can provide insights about how this occurs. This study informs social enterprise design strategies by indicating elements that can be activated to help realise capability. Findings raise questions about how to realise capability in different contextual circumstances;

for example, with different employee groups or organisational models. The study also raises questions about work integration social enterprises and employment in regional cities, suggesting extended eco-systems may be beneficial to provide easier avenues out of social enterprise and into mainstream employment – not for everyone, but perhaps more than occurs at present. Work to enhance methodology needs to progress so studies such as this can be optimally enabling for employees and supervisory staff, as well as increasingly efficient and enlightening. That will assist in empowering social enterprises seeking to analyse and show capability realisation. Methodological advancements will assist the field to move beyond measuring outputs. By applying novel social geography ideas to social enterprise, as here, the authors hope to inspire further methodological creativity in others.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors state that no financial benefit or interest has arisen from the direct applications of the research.

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Table 1 Social Enterprise Settings

Characteristics	*Farm*	*Catering*	*AssistAll*
Stated mission	Enable people with disadvantage or disability to enhance their life outcomes through open employment, training and other opportunities	Enable people with disadvantage or disability to enhance their life outcomes through open employment, training and other opportunities through providing customers with healthy, fresh, home-made food & excellent service at competitive prices	Supportive workplace to empower people with disabilities to take pride in their work, celebrate their achievements and produce quality products and services
Stated beneficiaries	People experiencing disability or disadvantage	People experiencing disability or disadvantage	People with a disability
Legal structure	Not-for-profit company	Not-for-profit company	Not for profit. Registered charity.
Industry areas	Goods & services retail, maintenance, cleaning, administrative services and light manufacturing.	Hospitality/goods & services retail	Goods & services retail
Goods & services areas	Produce to restaurants, onsite kitchen, vegetables for public sale, art studio, light manufacturing, assembly, packaging, courier & mail service, fleet car washing, garden maintenance	Food catering	Produce timber products, clothing recycling, mailouts, print finishing, assembly, data entry, catering, room-hire.
No. of Employees	50	28	51
No. of full or part-time staff	10	4	9
Socio-economic disadvantage (percentile)	8th	13th	43rd

1.Using the Australian Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). Includes attributes that reflect disadvantage - low income, high unemployment and relatively unskilled occupations. A lower score means a *higher* level of disadvantage (ABS Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas presented in profile.id.com.au).

Table 2 Themes coded as Capability

Capability theme *There is evidence this is a space that….*	Original[1] (O)/ or New theme[2] (N)
Facilitates strength-building/opportunity for physical activity	O
Helps realise technical skills or knowledge	O
Helps realise life skills	O
Provides opportunities for independent thinking or problem-solving	O
Helps realise feelings of accomplishment	O
Enables people to achieve potential	O
Helps realise new functioning	N
Provides opportunities for creativity	N
Activity/aspect apparently counter to above components (i.e. 'not capability'[3])	N

1.These themes arose through inductive coding in a previous pilot study: paper by authors; and originally based on Fleuret and Atkinson 2007.
2.These themes arose additionally through inductive coding in this study.
3.Some situations were identified that suggested situations that might run counter to capability realization (i.e. not capability).

Table 3 Summary of Capability Realisation Assemblage by Setting

Element in Assemblage	***Farm***	***Catering***	***AssistAll***
Narratives	Can-do Achieving Stories of progression Employees who become specialists	Can-do It's a business Employees who become specialists	Can-do Keep busy/ avoid employee boredom
People-related elements	Staff support employees in & out of work Mix of groups drawing on each others' skills	Staff support employees in & out of work Hands-off supervision Experienced employees helping inexperienced employees	Staff support employees in & out of work Many employees have been there for a long time [Limits*]
Physicality	Different work-tasks & locations, range from routine to complex and creative work-sites Places on and off-site (i.e. HQ) that signify progression	Small size of enterprise building and single industry sector [Limits* though employees can move to other enterprises] Different benches and Equipment align with task complexity	Variety of work-sites and tasks, but specialisation may be influenced by work rotation.
Practices	Facilitate life skills Goal setting Acknowledging achievements	Facilitate life skills Goal setting Acknowledging achievements Triaging for potential	Facilitate life skills Three-month work rotations [Limits*] Staff step in to do key tasks [Limits*] Now starting to think about how to raise skills

*In the Table, we propose all factors included as supporting capability realisation, except where *, which we propose as perhaps limiting capability realisation

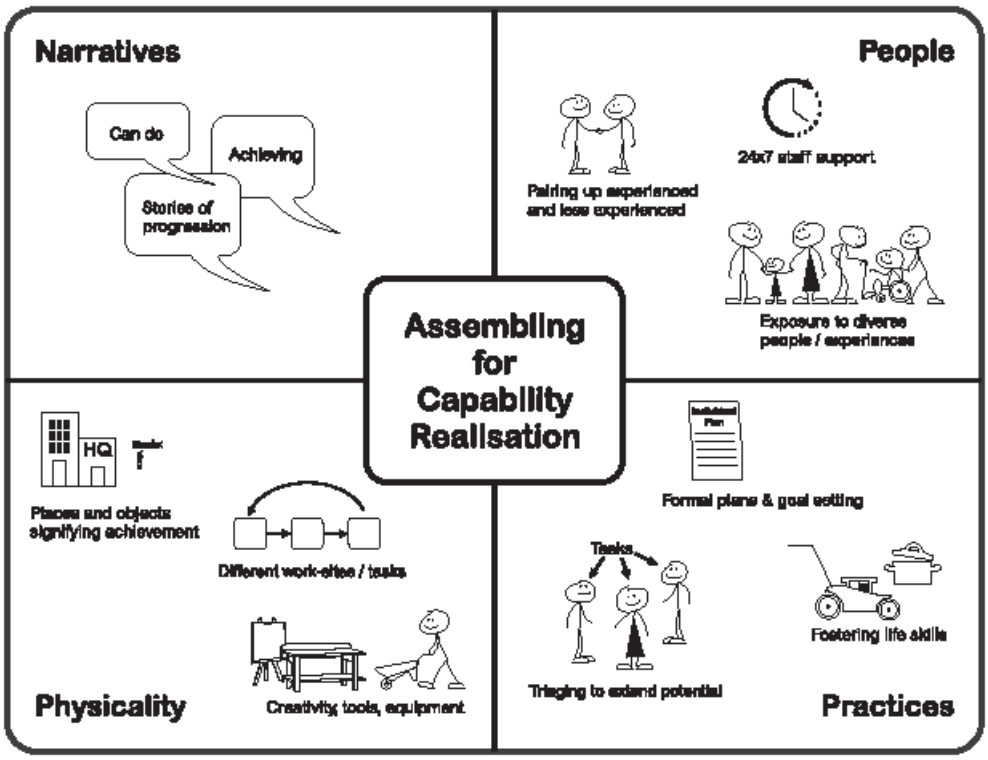
Narratives
Can do
Achieving
Stories of progression
People
Pairing up experienced and less experienced
24x7 staff support
Exposure to diverse people / experiences
Assembling for Capability Realisation
HQ
Places and objects signifying achievement
Different work-sites / tasks
Creativity tools, equipment
Physicality
Formal plans & goal setting
Tasks
Triaging to extend potential
Fostering life skills
Practices

Figure Caption:

Figure 1 Assembling for Capability Realisation